

The library of the University of the South Pacific

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The University of the South Pacific (U S P in all spoken and many written references) received its first students in early 1968; the first graduation ceremony takes place in December 1971. The four-year span is explained by the fact that most students undertake at least one year's study at U S P ("Preliminary Two", or "Preliminary One" followed by "Preliminary Two") before starting on the three-year degree courses. At its present stage of development the university actually has more students on preliminary courses than on undergraduate ones. As the university expands, and as the school systems of the region develop, this unusual situation will disappear. Another of the characteristics which distinguish U S P from other universities, and one which far from disappearing should grow in importance, is that U S P essentially rather than incidentally has an undergraduate population drawn from many countries. Each New Zealand university has a sizeable minority of overseas students but is still clearly a New Zealand university. Although U S P is situated in Fiji it is not a Fiji university with students from other Pacific territories but a university conceived, structured, and financed as a regional institution, which happens to be situated in Fiji. A third distinctive element in the character of the university is its avowedly utilitarian role. It was founded by royal charter to be "responsive to the well-being and needs of the communities of the South Pacific", and the relevance of

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its courses to the needs of the region is the subject of much discussion within the university, and of admonition from outside. In a metropolitan country the pressure on universities to be practical tends to vary with the economic fortunes of the country concerned. Here at U.S.P. the concept of "knowledge for its own sake" is one which is never likely to dominate the outlook of the university. The allocation of the resources of a poor region is made strictly on calculations of cost-effectiveness, and investment in university education must be repaid by the production of men and women trained in the specific skills required by the region.

The library at present occupies the one storey wooden building used when the campus was an R.N.Z.A.F. base as an officers' mess. The original bar was removed from one of the reading rooms as it was found to be a distraction. Other alterations have been made to the building, which is in consequence now sometimes known instead as a librarians' mess. Certainly the impossibility of eliminating steps between areas and hence the virtual abandonment of the book trolley do not leave one with a librarian's ideal. Three main reading rooms and two principal workrooms take up most of the 7,000-odd square feet of floor space. All rooms are screened. Ceiling fans are provided in most areas. There is no air conditioning but for most of the year in most parts of the building this lack is not noticed by staff. Whether there will be a long term effect on the books we shall have to wait to see. We can seat about 80 readers, and have occasionally been full; the current enrolment of some one hundred degree students and five hundred others puts this figure into perspective. The shelves are expected to be completely full in January 1972, and a new library to be shared initially with the offices of the School of Social and Economic Development is scheduled for completion in the second half of that year.

The present librarian, Mr H. Holdsworth, did not arrive in Fiji until January 1969, almost twelve months after the university had acquired its first books. No serious library planning or development had taken place during 1968, and the library as it is today is very largely the result of work since early 1969. We use the L.C. classification, and until recently used L.C. printed catalogue cards whenever possible. They are however being rapidly phased out, following a local customs ruling that because we type added entries on them they are "usable stationery". This attracts a rate of duty which, in conjunction with other costs, is prohibitive. A divided dictionary catalogue is made; L.C. subject headings are used, although for economy "see also" references are omitted. The library's special concern with Pacific materials can be seen in the provision of extra references when subject headings including Pacific geographical terms or political units are involved. AGRICULTURE—FIJI is provided with a reference from FIJI—AGRICULTURE, for example, and MOALA (an island within the Fiji group) one from FIJI—MOALA. In this way the subject catalogue becomes so far as Pacific items are concerned

rather more of a bibliographical guide than would otherwise be the case. LC headings are rarely changed, even when the American usage is unfamiliar; in difficult cases additional references or scope notes are provided. With British, Australian and New Zealand English being represented on the staff as well as American, not to mention the English of the majority, for whom it is a second language, I am surprised that such cases do not occur more often. For better or worse we use the 1968 filing rules almost unmodified. While these exasperate all the staff with experience of the old rules, they have proved to be easily learned by new staff, and so I would hope will be easily used by readers most of whose library experience will be rather slight.

Finance

Our financial situation is rather curious. We receive a reasonable share of the university's general budget and it is planned that we should continue to receive about 8.8½ percent during the next few years. However, the cash available for book orders and subscriptions is less than \$30,000 a year. *Chemical abstracts* and *Biological abstracts* together take nearly 10 percent of this. This is so far from adequate as to be almost ludicrous. We have to provide at sub-degree, degree, and staff levels material in a range of subjects which is far wider than the present small student enrolment might suggest; all the social sciences, the three basic natural sciences, education, mathematics, English, and so on. Fortunately we have received capital grants from Great Britain at the rate of another \$40,000 a year and this saves the situation. However, these are not available for any subscriptions or for books not published in Britain. A strict interpretation of "British" means for example that books from American publishers with London offices or agents are not eligible for purchase with British money: no Wiley, no Prentice-Hall, no McGraw-Hill. . . . At least some Academic Press books originate in Britain, and these are to my relief distinctively marked in their catalogues. But what of the position of such Anglo-American enterprises as Ann Arbor-Humphrey, or Gordon & Breach? In cases of doubt I have used a rule of thumb applicable only where both dollar and sterling prices are known, which involves doing quick conversions and discovering which price being the higher may be assumed to be the secondary rate including transatlantic freighting. Staff are soon forced into a full awareness of the difference between Macmillan (London) and Collier-Macmillan (New York); the former we probably can afford, the latter we probably cannot.

One result of this financial situation is that by no means all subscriptions and non-British books required for immediate curricular purposes can be afforded. On the other hand British books of wider relevance than present short term interests are acquired, and this helps to give substance to our ambition to be a general reference library for the region. So a few British titles in for instance fine art,

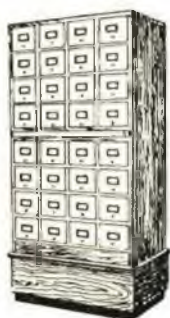
philosophy, or jurisprudence can be purchased to supplement those extra-curricular books received by gift. I well remember how pleased I was one evening to be able to supply a textbook on administrative law to the Leader of the Opposition. We admit people from outside the university if they can show that they need access to our stocks for the purposes of their studies or career. As our stock grows and the word gets around I expect such use to show substantial growth, for there is throughout the region a dearth of such facilities. By providing the service we should gradually create a body of opinion sympathetic to the claims of the university library. In the absence of any comparable existing facility we have to create a sense of the need before people will provide the means to satisfy it. It all sounds rather like a campaign to create a market for another unnecessary consumer luxury!

Both curricular and general stocks have developed by gift as well as by purchase. The U S P library has benefited greatly from gifts, both monographic and serial, and from being nominated as a depository by several international organisations. In particular the book drives organised by the New Zealand University Students Association have added almost 15,000 books to our stock, the books for the most part being those no longer needed by students in New Zealand universities. At present most of these have to be stored rather than publicly shelved but are accessible via the author catalogue. The fact that 20 percent of last year's collection were requested within six months shows the value of this addition to our stock. When we move into our permanent building in the second half of 1972 we shall be able to shelve the rest. Other New Zealand aid has come from libraries which have allowed U S P to select from disposal lists and have supplied photocopies and interloans.

Staff

Staff recruitment and training is more important at U S P than in a metropolitan library as no local training courses are available at any level. Junior and intermediate posts are already almost completely localised and may become fully so early in 1972. The localisation of senior positions is far harder to achieve, and while according to our programme we shall achieve this by 1976, I shall be rather surprised if we do. The competition for local people with qualifications appropriate to overseas courses at graduate or other full professional levels is intense. Creating the realisation that university librarianship could be as rewarding in all senses as careers in government, say, is no easy task. Our trainees work for a period of about a year with us before going overseas, gaining practical experience in as many sections of the library as possible. Moving them around means, with a small staff, that to create vacant positions assistants not going for overseas training must also be moved round. So they too get a greater range of experience than they would I think in a metropolitan country. I leave unspecified the consequent

workload on supervising staff. Our difficulties with the training programme have largely derived from multilateral availability of scholarships and courses with differing application and starting dates, and with differing interpretations of comparability of pre-entry qualifications. We hope we are gradually learning how to overcome these complications and that local staff will in due course come back fully trained and competent to challenge at least some of the assumptions behind the library as it has been built up so far. Such challenges and the library's response to general University developments will surely mean that some of the description given in this article will remain accurate for only a short period. It is our hope however that those coming after us will find that the foundations we have been establishing are appropriate to whatever superstructures may be needed in the future.



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